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AUTHOR Mizelle, Nancy B.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The Delta Project involves an interdisciplinary team of 4 middle school teachers and their approximately 100 students working together throughout grades 6, 7, and 8 for the 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93 school years in Elberton (Georgia). The relationships between the classroom structures used by the Delta Team teachers and the motivation of their students for the first 2 years of the project were studied. The project began when the teachers decided to create a new team organization, curriculum, and instruction. Three perspectives are brought together in this study. University-based researchers present an analysis of longitudinal data on the Delta classrooms. Teachers describe the project and its impact on students, and students relate their experiences. Overall, the Delta Project provides empirical evidence of the positive impact of the following practices on student motivation: (1) opportunities for working in groups that accept diversity; (2) opportunities for personally significant learning experiences; (3) opportunities for self-evaluation; and (4) opportunities to view mistakes as normal parts of the learning process. In general, students' self-esteem and attitudes toward school improved during the 2 years of the study. Students particularly liked staying together for 3 years. (Contains 22 references.) (SLD)

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Classroom Structures and Student Motivation: A Study of the Delta Project

Nancy B. Mizelle, Laurie E. Hart and P. Elizabeth Pate

Department of Elementary Education

The University of Georgia

Joan Jordan, Richard Matthews, Sue Matthews, and Vicky Scott

Elbert County School System

Elberton, Georgia

Steven Brown, Travis Christian, Elizabeth Hardy, and Candace Porter

Elbert County Middle School

Elberton, Georgia

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Classroom Structures and Student Motivation: A Study of the Delta Project

The Delta Project involves an interdisciplinary team of four middle school teachers and their approximately 100 students working together throughout Grades 6, 7, and 8 (the 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93 school years). This project began when the teachers decided to work together closely to create a new team organization, curriculum, and instruction for their students. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between the classroom structures used by the Delta Team teachers and the motivation of their students during the first two years of the Delta Project.

This paper brings together three different perspectives on the relationships between classroom structures and student motivation. Each perspective will be presented separately. The team of university-based researchers will present an analysis of longitudinal data they collected from the teachers and students in the Delta classrooms during the first two years of this project; the Delta Team teachers will describe the project and its impact on students; and four students will relate their experiences on the team and what the Delta Project has meant to them. It is important to note that the teachers and students have not limited their comments to a discussion of the first two years of the project.

Rationale for the Study

For a number of years, positive patterns of student motivation have been linked theoretically and empirically to different measures of success in school, including students' attitudes, achievement, and achievement-related behaviors (e.g., Ames & Ames, 1984; Beane & Lipka, 1987; Schunk & Meece, 1992). Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) found that students' self-efficacy predicted their use of self-regulating strategies and classroom achievement. Ames and Archer (1988) also found that students' perceptions of mastery goal orientation in the classroom were predictive of students' increased use of learning strategies, as well as their choice of challenging tasks and their positive attitudes toward classes. In their study of student effort in junior and senior high school courses, Mac Iver, Stipek, and Daniels (1990) determined that self-concept of ability was related to students' efforts in school and their perceptions of the usefulness of course content. After extensive study of young adolescents, Beane and Lipka (1987) concluded that students' positive self-esteem and clear self-concepts were positively correlated, not only to student achievement and self-regulation, but also to classroom participation, school completion, social status, and classroom behavior.

The importance of positive patterns of motivation is clear. However, a growing body of research indicates that the motivation of students declines as they proceed through school, particularly during the middle grades. Eccles (Parsons), Midgley, and Adler

(1984) reported that students' general attitudes toward school and specific school subjects decline gradually during the middle grades. There is other evidence that students become more motivated by grades and other external rewards and less motivated by the intrinsic satisfaction of learning during the middle grades (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Stipek, 1984). Though the findings are less consistent, some studies also show a decline in self-esteem, particularly at the transition from the elementary to the middle grades (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). In a review of research about the motivation of young adolescents, Eccles and Midgley (1989) concluded that students show lower achievement motivation after the transition to a junior high or middle school. However, they found that this drop in motivation depended on the school and classroom environments of the schools the students attended. Blumenfeld (1992) suggested further that the content within the classroom environment may be important. These researchers point to the importance of further research on student motivation that (a) carefully describes the classroom environment and (b) explores the possibility that students may react differently to similar classroom structures in different content areas.

Increasingly, theorists, researchers, and practitioners have examined the connections between students' motivational patterns and classroom practice. These connections have been discussed for many years in the literature on middle school curriculum and instruction and, more recently, in the research literature on

student motivation. From a middle school perspective, Thomason and Thompson (1992) discussed the mismatch between students' developmental characteristics and the practices often used in middle grades schools. They suggest "that this lack of fit . . . cause[s] students to become less involved in schooling, less motivated, and, thus, less likely to continue to perform as well academically as they once had in elementary school" (Thomason & Thompson, 1992, p. 275). Beane and Lipka (1987) describe classroom practices that enhance young adolescents' self-concept and self-esteem. These practices include: (a) opportunities for students to work together in groups that accept diversity, (b) opportunities for students to engage in personally significant learning experiences, (c) opportunities for students to engage in self-evaluation, and (d) opportunities for students to view mistakes as a normal part of both learning and growing up. In describing desired practices for increasing student motivation, Thomason and Thompson (1992) point to decreasing the use of ability grouping, creating small communities for learning, decreasing the emphasis on normative standards for evaluation, using more interdisciplinary team organization for teachers and greater reliance on integrated curriculum, decreasing the use of whole class instruction, allowing students greater autonomy, and giving more attention to the potential negative impact of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. This study provides empirical evidence of the impact of these recommended practices on middle school students' motivation.

Researchers in the field of motivation have begun recently to examine the connection between particular classroom structures and student motivation (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988; Marshall & Weinstein, 1984; Meece & Miller, 1992; Midgley & Eccles, 1990; Oldfather, 1991). Marshall and Weinstein (1984) theorized about the way particular classroom factors, including task structure, grouping practices, feedback and evaluation, motivational strategies, locus of responsibility for learning, and the quality of teacher-student relationships, affect the development of students' self-evaluations. In their 1988 study of students' learning strategies and motivation processes, Ames and Archer concluded that "modifying or changing the nature of students' experiences in the classroom may provide a viable way of redirecting students' achievement goal orientation" (p. 265).

In describing a classroom learning environment, Ames and her colleagues (Ames, 1990; Ames & Maehr, 1988) have focused on six dimensions that relate to students' motivation and development. "These dimensions include task design, distribution of authority, recognition of students, grouping arrangements, evaluation practices, and time allocation" (Ames, 1992, p. 332). Ames specifically recommended that teachers: (a) provide a variety of interesting, challenging tasks, (b) help students take responsibility for their own learning through opportunities to take leadership roles and make choices, (c) provide opportunities for recognition of all students and focus on individual effort and improvement, (d) use a variety of grouping arrangements for

students, (e) use a variety of evaluation practices that are private and based on student effort and improvement, and (f) consider students' achievement level and attention span when determining the workload, pace of instruction, and the amount of time allowed to complete learning activities. The acronym TARGET is used to represent these six classroom structures (Epstein, 1988, 1989). While studies have been conducted that examine the impact of particular classroom structures on student motivation, this study examines the impact on students' motivation when a number of these structures are simultaneously occurring in the classroom. Additionally, it provides evidence of the long-term effect of the structures on student motivation. It also provides evidence of the effect of teachers and students staying together as a middle school team on student motivation.

In this study, student motivation was viewed from a number of theoretical perspectives including Expectancy X Value, Achievement Goal Theory, and Competence and Self-Determination. In each of these theories students' own perceptions of themselves and the classroom are essential. In addition, the Expectancy X Value model of motivation as outlined by Eccles (1983) and Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) proposes that there are three components of student motivation: (a) an expectancy component, including students' beliefs and perceptions about their ability to do a task, (b) a value component, including students' goals and their beliefs about the interest and importance of a give task, and (c) an affective component, including students'

emotional reactions to tasks.

In summary, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between the Delta Team's classroom structures and students' motivation over a period of two years.

Delta Project

The participants in the Delta Project are from Elbert County Middle School, the only middle school in Elberton, Georgia. Elberton is a rural community in Northeast Georgia. The socio-economic status of the students in the school is moderate to low. The school has a multiracial, multiethnic student population. The Delta Team students are typical of students at Elbert County Middle School.

The Delta Project involves a team of 4 teachers and their approximately 100 students working together during the middle school years. As they began this project, the teachers' intent was to maintain or improve student achievement, improve students' higher order thinking and problem solving, improve students' self-concept/self-esteem, and improve students' attitudes and motivation. The teachers planned to accomplish these goals through new team organization, curriculum and instruction. New team organization included small group work, flexible scheduling, and teachers and students moving together through the middle grades. The team of teachers designed a curriculum with an increased emphasis on higher order thinking and problem solving. They worked together to plan interdisciplinary units of study which emphasized individual, small-group, and whole-team

projects. Instruction included more extensive use of cooperative learning to support student motivation, to provide a context for problem solving efforts, and to allow students to improve their communication and social skills. A team of researchers from the University of Georgia was invited to join this project to document the proposed innovations and their impact on the Delta Team students.

Method

Data Collection

A number of data sources were used to examine student motivation. Beginning in 1990, paper-and-pencil instruments were administered to all students (approximately 100) on the Delta Team during the fall and spring of each year. These instruments were designed to measure the following motivation constructs: (a) general self-esteem, (b) general school self-esteem, (c) peer relations self-esteem, (d) content-specific self-esteem, (e) content-specific mastery orientation, (f) content-specific performance orientation, (g) content-specific anxiety, (h) content-specific intrinsic value, and (i) content-specific self-efficacy. The content-specific constructs were measured in mathematics, reading, science, and social studies. In addition to the paper-and-pencil instruments, individual interviews were conducted with 13 Delta Team students during the spring of 1992. These interviews focused on students' descriptions and perceptions of the team organization, curriculum, and instruction.

To study the classroom structures used by the Delta teachers, five data sources were used: (a) paper-and-pencil instruments administered to all students on the team, (b) individual student interviews with 13 Delta Team students, (c) transcripts from audiorecorded teacher team planning sessions, (d) a chronicle of the Delta Project written by the teachers, and (e) observations by the university-based research team.

Data Analysis

Data from the paper-and-pencil instruments were analyzed using repeated measures ANOVA with post hoc analysis of significant F tests. Coding of the individual student interview transcripts began with the researchers using categories developed from the research literature on classroom structures and student motivation. As the process continued additional categories emerged. The team planning sessions were coded to determine the strategies the teachers used during planning and the topics they discussed. The categories that emerged came from repeated reading of the team planning session transcripts by the university-based research team (Hart, Pate, Mizelle, & Reeves, in press).

Findings

An examination of the classroom structure data sources reveals that the teachers presented students with a variety of learning activities and that students perceived these learning activities as interesting, challenging, and relevant. Students commented in the individual interviews about the fact that they

had few assignments from the textbook. They liked the variety of group and individual projects the teachers assigned.

How students were grouped for instruction was important to the Delta teachers. At the beginning of each school year, students were assigned to groups of four students which were called base groups. These groups were heterogeneous by achievement level, gender, and race. During many of the classroom learning activities students worked together in their base groups. For some classroom activities students worked in groups other than their base groups. Data from the paper-and-pencil instruments indicate that cooperation and interaction among students has increased over the two-year period. In the student interviews, students mention the importance of group work frequently. They talk about how they learn from each other, how they rely on each other, how they have learned to get along with each other, and how they feel like they have better ideas when they work together than when they work as individuals.

Several forms of evaluation were used for students' academic work. In their interviews, students indicated that they were involved in peer evaluation and they had the opportunity to correct errors on classwork and tests. In addition, teachers considered effort in their evaluation and recognition of students. Individuals and groups of students on the Delta Team often received rewards for both academic and non-academic activities.

In the context of these classroom structures, we found

significant changes in several aspects of students' motivation. Students' general school self-esteem was positive and significantly more positive during the seventh grade than the sixth. Students' peer relations self-esteem was very positive in both sixth and seventh grades; it increased significantly and steadily throughout both grades.

The patterns of change for the content-specific student motivation variables were not consistent. Students' science self-esteem was positive initially and improved significantly from the beginning of the sixth grade to the end of the seventh grade. There was a similar pattern of development in social studies. The pattern was different in mathematics. Students' mathematics self-esteem was positive in the fall of sixth grade but declined significantly during both sixth and seventh grades. Student self-efficacy in science improved significantly from the beginning of the sixth grade to the end of the seventh grade. Student self-efficacy in mathematics, however, declined significantly over the same period. Students' rating of intrinsic value for mathematics was high but also declined significantly from the fall of sixth grade to the spring of seventh grade. Students' anxiety about science was low initially and declined significantly during the sixth grade. Students' performance orientation in science increased significantly from the beginning of sixth grade to the end of seventh grade.

In general it seems that students' self-esteem and attitudes toward school improved during the two years of the study. In the

specific content areas, students' motivation increased in science, decreased in mathematics, and remained about the same in reading and social studies. Thus, it seems that the classroom structures used by the Delta Team had a greater impact on students' self- esteem and self-efficacy than on the other motivation variables.

To this point we have discussed our findings about classroom structures that are similar to those other researchers have examined. In this study, however, two other structures seem to have had an important impact on the motivation of the students. One of these structures, teachers and students staying together through the middle grades, was a part of the project design. The other structure, teacher-student relationships, emerged from our analysis of the interview data.

In discussing staying together for three years, students repeatedly indicated that they liked it. They felt that it allowed them to get to know each other better and to know the teachers and what they expected better. They felt that it helped them feel more self-confident, particularly at the beginning of the second year. Students commented that they did not have to worry about figuring out the kinds of things the teachers wanted them to learn and the expectations the teachers had for classroom behavior. The students also felt that it provided them the opportunity to be more involved in major and long-term projects, like gardening and sharathons, as well as several trips during the seventh and eighth grades.

As students were interviewed, they were asked to talk about what was going on with their team and how they felt about the Delta Project. After the students talked generally about these questions, they also responded to more specific questions (e.g., "What do you think about the base groups?"). Students were not asked specifically about their teachers, but as the researchers read the transcripts they found that students repeatedly mentioned their teachers and the positive relationships that they felt they had with them. For example, when one African-American student was asked if there was anything else that he felt strongly about, he responded

> I feel strongly about the teachers and what we do on the team. But we're different from the other teams and we have more fun. We do a lot of fun stuff. We work on projects as groups and um we get awards. You know we don't hardly get that much detention. It depends on what you do. You know they just don't give it to you because they think you need it. They just, you know, it depends on what you do. They don't pay us no different, they don't dislike you, they don't dislike you. I think they like everybody. They'll tell nothing wrong. They helped you out a lot. If you sit down and talk with them they'll listen to you and make you understand. They got time for what you got to tell them.

The student interviews indicate that one reason the students were interested in learning, motivated to learn, is that they felt the teachers understood them, cared for them, and were willing to

take time to work with them.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between the classroom structures used by the Delta Team teachers and the motivation of their students during the first two years of the Delta Project. This project began with a group of teachers who were particularly concerned with the affective development of middle school students. They felt that by making certain changes in the way their team was organized, the curriculum they presented, and the way they taught they could foster positive attitudes and increased motivation among their students.

Since it is more typical to find a decline in student motivation during the middle grades, it is noteworthy that the Delta Team students were positive about school, their teachers, and the methods of classroom instruction. These attitudes are reflected in data from the paper-and-pencil instruments and the individual student interviews. In addition, students' self-esteem in science and social studies improved during sixth and seventh grades.

Recent research (e.g., Ames, 1992; Beane & Lipka, 1987; Blumenfeld, 1992; Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Marshall & Weinstein, 1984; Thomason & Thompson, 1992) in the areas of middle grade education and motivation indicates a need for increased attention to classroom structures when considering student motivation. This study addresses this need. In so doing we have found that

our study supports and adds to the research of others.

We believe that this study adds empirical support to the claim of Ames (1992) that increased use of the TARGET structures can lead to increased student motivation. It also supports Marshall and Weinstein's (1984) theory that student-teacher relationships ought to be included as an important classroom variable when considering student motivation.

This study expands research on classroom structures and student motivation by examining the long-term effect of particular structures on several different aspects of students' motivation and by examining the impact of classroom structures in different content areas.

While our study has addressed classroom structures and student motivation, we feel that it is important to continue to examine these same variables through the third year of the Delta Project. We feel that it is important to look more closely at the classroom in the different content areas. Finally, we believe that it is important to investigate the effects of the classroom experiences of these students on their transition into high school.

Teachers' Perspectives: The Delta Project

It is the intent of the Delta Team teachers to improve student self-concept/self-esteem, attitudes and motivation, critical thinking and problem solving skills, as well as student achievement.

Delta Team Philosophy:

*We believe that every student is of inestimable value. We believe that not all students learn in the same way. However, every student has a right to learn as much as his or her capabilities will allow. Some students' behavior should not restrict the rights of others to learn.

*We believe that the intrinsic need to feel good about oneself is essential to success in school and in life. Every student needs to know someone cares for and abut him or her.

*We realize that we do not exist in a vacuum. We are dependent on other human beings. Those of us who learn how to work with others for the realization of individual as well as common goals are more apt to achieve those objectives than if we worked in isolation.

*We believe that children strive to meet the expectations which others invest in them. Students should not be intimidated or threatened by others.

*We believe that the collegial support provided in a team of teachers enhances the quality of instruction as well as the

positive attitude and effective performance of teachers. *We believe that students and teachers alike will thrive when working in an environment in which the conditions listed above are present.

Our dreams from the summer of '89 have become our continuously evolving reality. We no longer sit and think about what "it" would be like. We find ourselves right in the midst of "it." The barriers that initially presented themselves, that appeared to be insurmountable, are now a thing of the past. We have found that the obstacles that we were faced with were in fact ones that we had placed before ourselves. Perhaps one of the most important ideas that has come out of the Delta Project is a message to all teachers--You are the catalysts! From elementary through higher education, if the teacher is not willing to change, the change will not happen.

The Delta Project has made a number of changes in team organization, curriculum and instruction over the past three years. In fact, we have found that "change" is an essential part of our everyday experience.

Life in the Delta Team begins with "what are we going to do today?" The students look forward to alternative schedules, working with new groups of students, making team decisions, designing their own curricula, etc. Just when we (teachers as well as students) think we have figured out what is going on, variety strikes, and off we go in a new and different direction.

We as teachers have taken the primary focus off the

curriculum and placed it directly on the student. We maintain that in order for a student to be open to learning, there has to be a "bond" established within the learning environment. This bond is not only between teacher and student, but between student and their peers as well. Once this bond has been established, the students are more receptive to the curriculum, whatever it may be.

Parents have expressed on many occasions how our team has provided a lot of stability for their generally unstable "in-between ages". Most feel that having the same teachers for the three years at the middle school has created a sense of community within our team of students as well as parents. One parent remarked, "Until Jason got to the middle school and became involved with the Delta Team, he hated school. Now he looks forward to each and every day. He was just never like that before. It [the Delta Team] has made a big difference in his whole attitude."

As Delta Team teachers, we now can't imagine ever going back to a new group of kids every nine months. Coming back in August after the first year, teachers and students alike felt like we were picking up from where we left off. The year-to-year transition that most teachers and students go through was practically nonexistent. The new students that transferred into our school system that were placed in the Delta Team automatically felt the sense of community, thus making their initial adjustment period much easier. When you make the

commitment to keep the same group of students for three years, you have a totally different outlook. You no longer say to yourself, "I can put up with anything for nine months," you make a concerted effort to improve each and every student in as many ways as you can reach them.

On the down side, don't expect to see many dry eyes in June. The team has become an extended family. Perhaps the biggest challenge of all is letting them go.

Students' Perspectives: The Delta Project

The following paragraphs are an explanation of the Delta Team and how it functions and operates. In these we talk about communication, discipline, getting along, the important things and how it compares to other teams. It is a general idea of how the students of the Delta Team feel.

We have been working together for three years and have come to realize that the Delta Team is a family who works together and cares about each other. We feel it is important to educate others about the ways of the Delta Team because we believe it makes teaching of everyday material more interesting and fun to learn.

Steven

Activities

The teachers in our delta team, teach us in many fun, and interesting ways. In stead of working by ourselves all the time in the book we just skim over all the foot notes and bold faced letters words. To find out what a chapter is about instead of just keeping on reading out of the book we have to prepare little skits and explain to the class what we learned about in our group. When this is all over we are given tests and quizzes to see if we paid attention a easy 100 if you were listening.

The greatest activity that I felt helped me the most was the sharathon. It was basically little presentations set up at the armory. The presentations were all about vertebrates and students in the second grade from Blackwell and Falling Creek

came to see this. Later, they wrote notes saying they really liked the sharathon. It taught them a lot about animals that they did not know.

In math we are sometimes expected to make games and let other groups work them and give us a grade and usually everybody likes everybody and everybody gets a good grade. I like that way the best.

In language arts we use a good method to make us read and spell better and get rewarded. We write letters to stars and ask them question and ask them if our letters are good enough to send us something with there signature on it.

In every class there is a student teacher and they give us tokens if we get questions right and these tokens can add up and we can get big prizes.

Another fun activity that we have accomplished is to make a garden. This was better than just trying to see if we can keep a egg for a week. We had to see if we could make something grow that could be eaten. The gardens taught us a lot about responsibility. These gardens were basically 6 plots and we had about twenty four or twenty five groups we had to split them up into 4 groups to a plot. And we all had to come up with an idea that would look good in the gardens. Some of us didn't like some of the ideas and we just came to an agreement and that's what we did.

We have student teachers and they are basically teachers who are learning to teach. We have not had these teachers for the

whole year, we just had them for like six weeks. We got more teachers who are trying to become a teacher every quarter. Some of these teachers are nice and teach us something. They teach us this by giving us tokens every time we get something right. Pretty soon we get a large amount of these tokens and get a very big prize.

Communicate

In the delta team we communicate. This communicating helps us to get closer to each other. It makes them feel like they can tell you anything and trust you more. This communicating can also help you get a better grade and be a better student when we communicate in groups we do it in a very special way. We have to use twelve inch voices. These voices lets us talk silent to each other or whisper so we can not be heard. We communicate with our partners they take our ideas down and we take down theirs and if we have any suggestions we tell them. When we get answers wrong we get together and go over what we got wrong. We put subjects together, like we are doing now for our next shar-a-thon. We have to communicate with our teachers by writing in these little journals and tell what we done and what we found out.

This group makes me feel like I'm someone special, like a person instead of just ignoring us. I feel this group has helped me get along with people. What I like best about this team is the way they teach us in groups and reward us if we are right.

I think communicating will help you be a better student in the society help people do more and you will know just how to

talk to people.

Travis

Discipline

Discipline comes at a time in everyone's life, but in the Delta Team they have a special way of doing it. For most students in the Delta Team they have not experienced the school-wide discipline system. I'm not saying that we are perfect. It's just that the teachers give you so many chances to correct your mistakes before they take action. But in other teams, for something as simple as being tardy to class they send you to the office. This takes more class time than if you never showed up at all. In the Delta Team the teachers try to keep you in class as much as possible so you can learn. They handle their own discipline most of the time.

In our team discipline comes when you don't follow classroom expectations. These expectations were established by the teachers at the beginning of sixth grade and they have not changed. All of the teachers have the same rules and expectations. One of the expectations is "Follow directions promptly." All of the expectations are equally important. If you can't abide by the classroom expectations of the Delta team, then you will be on the first step of the discipline system.

The first step of the discipline system is "time out." In time out, you have a sheet that is called the "Time Out Essay." You have to copy this essay twice. At the bottom it says for you to fill out why you were sent to time out. You also fill in why

you did what you did and your plan for changing your behavior so that you won't have to return to Time Out. If you have been to time out repeatedly, they will assign you after school detention. In detention you sit at a table by yourself and stare at the wall for an hour.

It is important to talk about discipline because in other teams if you do something they send you to detention or straight to the office. But in the Delta team they send you to time out to let you think about what you did wrong. If you have time to think about what you did, it is more meaningful than if they just send you to the office and then send you to in-house or home for a few days. In time out, you can think about what you did wrong.

Even though time out and the other part of the discipline system is not something to be proud of, the students are thankful that the Delta Team has time out and the special discipline system. A lot of the team would be in a lot of trouble a lot of the time if it weren't for the Delta Team's system.

Elizabeth

<u>Delta Team vs. Others</u>

The Delta team is different. Because of cooperative learning our team is more fun, interesting, and unpredictable than other teams. In other classes you sit in desks doing bookwork, in the delta team you never know quite what to expect. We always sit at tables with our groups. Some days we do group activities, other times we play games. Sometimes we even get to make projects and present them. Other teams are boring. Note

taking, bookwork, and lectures are common in the other teams. The students of the Delta Team do their fair share of this work, but its a lot easier if you have a group to work with. Then you have other people to talk to and get ideas from. It helps a lot in learning.

I like the way we do things in our team. I would much rather be gathering different opinions on a matter with a small group that I would work on it by myself. You do a better job on activities and assignments when you have other people's ideas to consider. The individual work done in other teams does not help the student learn and understand as much. These are reasons why I like our team.

Most important things about Delta

There are many important things about the Delta Team. One of the most important things is Cooperative Learning. Working in groups is the basis of what our team is about. When we work in groups we sit with 3 or 4 other people and complete activities together. Most of the time we work in groups but sometimes we don't work in groups. Some situations like tests, quizzes, and special assignments require that you work as an individual. Being able to talk to the other people in the groups is a very important part of group work. You must learn these skills to make it in life.

Another important thing about the delta team is all the projects and activities we take part in. Share-a-thons, Field trips, and other interesting projects help enhance our learning.

These things are lots of fun but teach us a lot about our subjects.

I think the most important thing about our team is the unity we feel. It's almost like a family. You feel comfortable around just about everyone. The teachers help us by understanding how we feel as teenagers, and most of the students are easy to get along with.

The Delta Team is a very important part of my life. It has been a fun, interesting, and educational experience for me. I have learned so much in these past years. I like it for many reasons, but these are the most important.

Three Years with the Delta Team

For the past three years I have been a member of the Delta Team. During sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, I have had the same teachers and worked with the same students. We have gotten to know each other very well and have learned how to get along with our classmates.

In these three years I have learned valuable lessons that I will be able to use later in life! The lessons I've learned in the Delta Team have helped me learn to work with others, communicate better and listen to other students points of view. Learning to work together is a skill everyone needs to learn. We learn this in the Delta Team!

I believe that the things that we learned will help us in High School. Even though it will be hard to adjust to all the note taking and lecturing at the high school, I think that in the

long run the skills that we have learned in the past years will help us out in the real world.

One of the disadvantages of being in this team for 3 years are that you don't get to meet many other students in other teams.

I'm glad I've been a part of the Delta team for these 3 years. I believe that it has been a very helpful, and educational experience.

Candace

Groups

The main purpose of groups is to be able to help others. Groups are usually set up with these things considered: race, sex, working skills, and communication. This is our third year of working in groups and we now have more experience.

Working in groups was so different during our first year in the cooperative team. It's not like the conventional style of sitting in rows. We sit at tables where we can talk to each other face to face. Nobody gets angry if we discuss our work, unless we have been given other instructions. In the classes where you sit in rows, the teacher may see you talking and you'll get in trouble.

In groups, you get everybody's input and the work gets done a lot faster. Even if you think you're sure you know exactly how to do something, somebody else may see it from a totally different angle. It opens up your mind to a variety of different ideas and different points of view. Instead of having one, one-

sided opinion you have three or four different opinions to work with. Sometimes you want to fuss, fight, and argue, but you have to learn how to work things like that out. Listening to others is a hard, but important part of working together.

Groups also serve as a resource center. If you don't understand a question, somebody in your group may be able to explain it to you better. Some people may not understand what the teacher is saying and it helps if somebody's there to repeat it or to break it down for you.

As we said before, we have been working in groups for three years. Therefore, we have more experience and our teachers do to. Our teachers know how to group us better. They know who works together best and what personalities click. They also know who shouldn't be placed together in a group.

Working in groups gives you the feeling that you belong somewhere. It's like you're needed and nobody else can take your place. Working in groups helps you get along better. You learn how to work and communicate with a mixture of people you normally would not associate with. It really helps shy people because everybody has to participate. In order for a group to work there cannot be one single silent partner.

Working in groups prepares you for a world where communication is the key. That's something that you cannot teach out of a textbook. Instead, it's something that you have to learn from actual experience.

Communication

Communication is very important in our team. We do not only talk about our work, but our teachers understand our other problems. They know how hard it is being a teenager. They also aren't so caught up in the system that they have forgotten that they are educators and are only teaching for the money. Some teachers have been teaching so long that they no longer care. Out teachers aren't like that. Being a teenager is hard, yet they seem to understand no matter what. They always seem to find the time to help you.

A lot of teachers don't take the time to listen to their students. We can really talk to our teachers about anything. They talk to us as equals, as though our opinions count. That's really important. It's hard to respect somebody who doesn't have the courtesy to respect you. It hurts your self-esteem when somebody doesn't listen to you. Especially when it's an adult.

Teaching System

The teaching system in our team is very unique. Books are used more as a reference book. It is a more "free-spirited" class. For example: In science one day we watched a filmstrip. The next day we were supposed to have a five minute discussion, then go on to something else. We talked about the filmstrip the whole class period. It's like that in a lot of our classes. We're able to help each other also.

Nothing is on a set schedule in our team. Everything is subject to change. That's what makes it so interesting. That's

what helps us stay attentive. We always get our work done, we just don't get it done at any specific time. We learn the same amount of things that other students in other classes learn. We just learn in a different way, which helps because there are a lot of differences in this world.

Over the past three years I've heard some comments like, "you all never do anything"! The fact is that our teachers are doing a lot for us. They care about us and it matters to them what we do. They really want us to succeed.

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